

From: [Sheila Collins](#)
To: [Public Affairs](#)
Subject: [External] Re: Sentencing Commission to Expand the Definitions Around Compassionate Release
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JUDGE CARLTON W. REEVES,
CHAIRMAN
U.S. SENTENCING COMMISSION
Office of Public Affairs
One Columbus Circle, NE
Suite 2-500, South Lobby
Washington, DC, 20002-8002

Re: Compassionate Release Expansion

Dear Honorable Judge Reeves,

Hi, my name is Sheila Collins, and I am the founder and owner of Girlfriends Who Inspire Change LLC. Girlfriends Who Inspire Change (GWIC), LLC is a cause-driven social enterprise network that sells E-Commerce products and services online. We inspire women and girls to be self-sufficient and social change agents. The business model uses goods and services to address social evils and economic issues. The business model combines the social impact of a non-profit with a for-profit commercial strategy to make a difference in *All* people's lives, including *underrepresented* communities. Our purpose is to support one of our sisterhood networks, Mass Liberation, in requesting that you expand the definition around **Compassionate Release**.

Thank you for prioritizing policy amendments and consideration of possible amendments to §1B1.13 (Reduction in Term of Imprisonment Under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A) (Policy Statement)) to (A) implement the First Step Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115–391); and public comments and suggestions on what should be considered extraordinary and compelling reasons for sentence reductions under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A). We appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts and ideas and it is with good hope that our comments will be thoughtfully considered and applied.

In 2018, Congress passed The First Step Act, which was long overdue. Section 403 of the First Step Act ELIMINATED the draconian and egregious practice of enhanced mandatory consecutive sentences; designated for “second and successive” 924 (c) convictions; in the same indictment/case; where the first such conviction is obtained. After the legislative changes brought forth by the First Step Act of 2018,

those staggering sentences will be permissible only after a truly definitive “subsequent” conviction. This decision reflects Congress’ original intent of the consecutive term for a successive 924(c) offense when the mandatory minimum sentences were added to 924 as a floor amendment to the Gun Control Act of 1968.

Unfortunately, Section 403 of the First Step Act of 2018 was not rendered retroactive. This glaring omission contributes to the continual judicial and perhaps unconstitutional purgatory state for the incarcerated community; and data provides that incarcerated African Americans are most affected by this oversight and consequence.

This non-retroactive implementation of section 403 should no longer be considered as barring inmates from seeking relief from the courts. While there are circuits that have agreed that the policy statement is applicable and are granting relief; there are renegade circuits and judges (such as the Eleventh circuit) that do not agree with this.

As a taxpayer and a law abiding citizen, it is my good faith hope that the First Step Act in its entirety will be made retroactive and implemented as written. It is also my hope that the retroactivity of 924 (c) stacking enhancement is not left up to the courts and judges discretion for who should be granted relief. The draconian and oppressive practice of stacking 924 (c) has been eliminated not for some, but for ALL. Therefore, retroactivity should apply to all those still affected by and serving excruciatingly lengthy prison terms because of this stacking clause.

The good intention of rehabilitation cannot be served if a defendant has nothing to look forward to beyond indefinite imprisonment. “Hope” is the necessary condition of mankind, because we were all created in the image of GOD. Judges should be cautious before severely sentencing people so that they don’t destroy all hope one may have and obliterate all possibility of a functional and serviceable life after incarceration. Any sentence beyond 25 years is debilitating. 59 years is heartbreaking and surely life ending. Especially when no one was physically hurt, nor a life taken. Many incarcerated members are serving this type of time because of the 924 (c) staking provision. Congress has determined this provision is and was egregious and thus made the correction. The public to asks that the sentencing commission amend the guidelines immediately to become in alignment with what congress performed.

In closing, “Punishment should not be more sever than that necessary to satisfy the goals of punishment.” United States v. Carbajal, 2005.

“If incarceration is for correction, then it has served its purpose in the lives of those who have served decades in prison. If it is for punishment, then society has been served its justice”.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of those who cannot.

Sheila Collins

Founder | Owner

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Judge Luis Felipe Restrepo, Commissioner Vice Chair

Laura Mate, Commissioner

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Judge Claria Horn Boom, Commissioner

Candice C. Wong, Commissioner

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Judge John Gleeson, Commissioner